DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 364 475 SO 023 605

AUTHOR	McCoy, Martha
TITLE	America's Role in the Middle East. Public Talk Series.
INSTITUTION	Brown Univ., Providence, RI. Center for Foreign Policy Development.; Topsfield Foundation, Pomfret, CT. Study Circles Resource Center.
PUB DATE	Mar 91
NOTE	32p.; For other items in the series, see SO 023 604-609.
AVAILABLE FROM	Study Circles Resource Center, P.O. Box 203, Pomfret, CT 06258 ($2).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Education; *Discussion Groups; Foreign Countries; Global Approach; *International Cooperation; Leaders Guides; *Middle Eastern Studies; Military Science; Power Structure; Public Affairs Education
IDENTIFIERS	*Middle East; *Study Circles

ABSTRACT

This program guide encourages discussion on what role the United States should pursue in the Middle East. The guide is designed to assist in the discussion of critical social and political issues through a balanced, nonpartisan presentation of a spectrum of views. The core of the program considers four underlying goals: (1) the United States as regional superpower; (2) the United States creates a military balance of power in the region; (3) the United States promotes regional and global cooperation in Middle East security; and (4) the United States minimizes its role in the Middle East. The program packet contains the following sections: (1) introductory letter; (2) notes to organizers; (3) suggestions for leading this discussion; (4) leading a study circle; (5) four options--a framework for discussion; (6) the options in brief; (7) perspectives on the options; (8) suggestions for participants; (9) two background readings; (10) follow-up form; and (11) Public Talk Series Programs and other resources available from the Study Circles Resource Center. (NLA)

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STUDY CIRCLES RESOURCE CENTER

Public Talk Series

AMERICA'S ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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March, 1991

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"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."
Margaret Mead

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America's Role in the Middle East is a Project of:

The Study Circles Resource Center of Topsfield Foundation, Inc.

in cooperation with

The Choices Education Project of
The Center for Foreign Policy Development at
Brown University

America's Role in the Middle East Primary Author: Martha McCoy

The goal of the Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC) is to advance deliberative democracy and improve the quality of public life in the United States. By promoting small-group, democratic, participatory discussions on social and political issues, SCRC hopes to contribute to a more enlightened and involved citizenry capable of making decisions based on informed judgment.

Please write the Study Circles Resource Center, PO Box 203, Pomfret, CT 06258 or call (203) 928-2616 for more information on study circles and the Study Circles Resource Center.

For information about a high school curriculum version of *America's Role in the Middle East*, contact Susan Graseck at the Choices Education Project, Center for Foreign Policy Development, Box 1948, Brown University, Providence, RI 02912, (401) 863-3155.

"At the end of the day, the American people are going to have to decide. No President can pursue a policy for very long without the support and understanding of the Congress and the American people."

— Dean Rusk

March, 1991

In a democracy, it is crucial that the public have input into the decisions government makes. Citizens must listen to a variety of viewpoints, consider the consequences of all positions, and make hard choices.

The Study Circles Resource Center's Public Talk Series is based on this belief. The series is designed to assist in the discussion of critical social and political issues; each program of the series offers a balanced, non-partisan presentation of a spectrum of views.

America's Role in the Middle East is a continuation of the dialogue presented in *Crisis in the Gulf: A Study Circle on America's Choices*, a program of prewar options produced in December, 1990. As the war in the Gulf draws to a close, we need to discuss what role is wise and possible for the United States to pursue in the Middle East.

There are no easy answers, but together citizens can inform themselves and decide on basic directions. We invite you to meet with your friends, neighbors, peers, and associates in small informal discussions to decide what policy direction we should take in the postwar Middle East.

The public is responsible for establishing purposes and setting direction for our country. This responsibility cannot be delegated.

Paul J. Aicher
Chairman

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Suggestions for Leading AMERICA'S ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

All discussion groups are different. The participants and the world events of the moment make this so. The following observations are intended not to be definitive, but to offer suggestions from leaders who have experienced discussion groups on this topic. Since the very object of such discussions is to learn from each other, the leader must accept the risks and rewards that come from the spontaneity and insights of individuals. The leader's job, then, is to strike a balance between spontaneity and focus.

This discussion is designed to take approximately two hours. To open the discussion you might ask people to talk about their views on the reasons the U.S. became involved in the Gulf war in January. You might then ask them to discuss whether their views on the reasons for involvement changed during the war. Next, as a transition to discussing the options for postwar policy, it would be useful to ask for views on how the war will alter our future dealings with the Middle East. This will set the groundwork for the discussion of America's role in the region. It is important to get people to start talking, but to hold off on staking out positions. These questions also show how we need to be sensitive to change. This introductory part of the discussion could well take a half-hour or more.

The latter half of this discussion could then focus on the options outlined in the enclosed material. Give the participants a few minutes to review the "Four Options: A Framework for Discussion" and "The Options in Brief." Encourage discussion of the options presented. Then the participants can speak to the option(s) closest to their thinking and explain their viewpoints. One useful device to get people talking is to ask if anyone in the group would be willing to defend an option to the group, even if it is not an option of that participant's choice. This form of role playing can also help the group consider unpopular options. Keep in mind (and remind the group if you must) that a lot of intelligent, sincere Americans have opted for each position.

Consensus need not be a goal of the discussion, and in fact may be an unsuitable goal. You might close the discussion by asking what participants would say to President Bush and his advisors if they had a minute or two of his time, and then invite each participant to answer in turn.

All participants should be encouraged to fill out and return the "Follow-up Form" and, more importantly, to inform their congressional delegation of their viewpoints on this issue, whatever they may be.

Finally, enjoy yourself! Although the subject is serious, the process will be more beneficial for everyone if you and the participants are able to share concerns in a relaxed atmosphere.

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Notes to Organizers

This packet of material is provided to assist you in setting up a discussion program on an important and timely subject – America's postwar role in the Middle East.

Four possible policy options form the core of the program:
Option 1 – U.S. as Regional Superpower
Option 2 – U.S. Creates a Military Balance of Power in the Region
Option 3 – U.S. Promotes Regional and Global Cooperation on Middle East Security
Option 4 – U.S. Minimizes Its Role in the Middle East

These options are designed to be the basis of a highly participatory discussion in which a leader assists participants in wrestling with this difficult issue. By making a strong case for each option, the material reflects a broad range of viewpoints; it is non-partisan, fair, and balanced.

Along with supporting material, the options are designed for use in a single-session program of approximately two hours. As the organizer, you will need to recruit between 5 and 20 participants, decide on a time and place for the meeting, select a leader, photocopy the material (participants will need copies of items marked with an asterisk in the table of contents), and mail them to the participants. If you feel that there is not enough time to mail information to participants prior to meeting, the components that should be handed out during the meeting include the "Four Options: A Framework for Discussion," "The Options in Brief," "Suggestions for Participants," and "Follow-up Form."

The most important task of the organizer is choosing the discussion leader. This person need not be an expert on the subject, but some familiarity with the topic is desirable. A leader should be able to encourage participants to freely express their thoughts while maintaining some focus to the session as a whole. A commitment to balance and impartiality is essential. Included for the leader's use is "Suggestions for Leading *America's Role in the Middle East*," with questions and specific suggestions for keeping the discussion lively and focused. The leader should also read carefully the general suggestions in "Leading a Study Circle."

You are welcome to photocopy this entire package and share it with others who might be interested in the program. Our only request is that you complete and return the questionnaire on the back cover of this packet to let us know what happened in your community. Your feedback is very important to us!

One final note: Study circles are traditionally multiple-session programs in which participants choose the direction of their discussions and have the opportunity to develop familiarity with one another. Based on its experience with this program, we hope that your discussion group will decide to evolve into a study circle. Please call or write the Study Circles Resource Center for more information on study circles and the Public Talk Series.

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Leading a Study Circle

The study circle leader is the most important person in determining its success or failure. It is the leader's responsibility to moderate the discussion by asking questions, identifying key points, and managing the group process. While doing all this, the leader must be friendly, understanding, and supportive.

The leader does not need to be an expert. However, thorough familiarity with the reading material and previous reflection about the directions in which the discussion might go will make the leader more effective and more comfortable in this important role.

The most difficult aspects of leading discussion groups include keeping discussion focused, handling aggressive participants, and keeping one's own ego at bay. A background of leading small group discussions or meetings is helpful. The following suggestions and principles of group leadership will be useful even for experienced leaders.

• **"Beginning is half," says an old Chinese proverb.** Set a friendly and relaxed atmosphere from the start. A quick review of the suggestions for participants will help ensure that everyone understands the ground rules for the discussion.

• **Do not allow the aggressive, talkative person or faction to dominate.** Doing so is a sure recipe for failure. One of the most difficult aspects of leading a discussion is restraining domineering participants. Don't let people call out and gain control of the floor. If you allow this to happen the aggressive will dominate, you may lose control, and the more polite people will become angry and frustrated.

• **Don't allow the group to get hung up on unprovable "facts" or assertions.** Disagreements about basic facts are common for controversial issues. If there is debate over a fact or figure, ask the group if that fact is relevant to the discussion. In some cases, it is best to leave the disagreement unresolved and move on.

• **Draw out quiet participants.** Do not allow anyone to sit quietly or to be forgotten by the group. Create an opportunity for each participant to contribute. The more you know about each person in the group, the easier this will be.

• **Be an active listener.** You will need to truly hear and understand what people say if you are to guide the discussion effectively. Listening carefully will set a good example for participants and will alert you to potential conflicts.

• **Stay neutral and be cautious about expressing your own values.** As the leader, you have considerable power with the group. That power should be used only for the purpose of furthering the discussion and not for establishing the correctness of a particular viewpoint.

• **Use conflict productively and don't allow participants to personalize their disagreements.** Do not avoid conflict, but try to keep discussion focused on the point at hand. Since everyone's opinion is important in a study circle, participants should feel safe saying what they really think – even if it's unpopular.

• **Don't be afraid of pauses and silences.** People need time to think and reflect. Some

times silence will help someone build up the courage to make a valuable point. Leaders who tend to be impatient may find it helpful to count silently to 10 after asking a question.

• **Do not allow the group to make you the expert or "answer person."** You should not play the role of final arbiter. Let the participants decide what they believe. Allow group members to correct each other when a mistake is made.

• **Don't always be the one to respond to comments and questions.** Encourage interaction among the group. Participants should be conversing with each other, not just with the leader. Questions or comments that are directed at the leader can often be deflected to another member of the group.

• **Synthesize or summarize the discussion occasionally.** It is helpful to consolidate related ideas to provide a solid base for the discussion to build upon.

• **Ask hard questions.** Don't allow the discussion to simply confirm old assumptions. Avoid following any "line," and encourage participants to re-examine their assumptions. Call attention to points of view that have not been mentioned or seriously considered, whether you agree with them or not.

• **Utilize open-ended questions.** Questions such as, "What other possibilities have we not yet considered?" will encourage discussion rather than elicit short, specific answers and are especially helpful for drawing out quiet members of the group.

• **Don't worry about attaining consensus.** It's good for the study circle to have a sense of where participants stand, but it's not necessary to achieve consensus. In some cases a group will be split; there's no need to hammer out agreement.

• **Close the session with a brief question that each participant may respond to in turn.** This will help them review their progress in the meeting and give a sense of closure.

AMERICA'S ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Four Options: A Framework for Discussion

On January 16, the United States and its allies went to war against Iraq. Although there were dissenting voices among the public, most Americans supported the President's decision to use force. Yet there is no consensus on what long-term goals the U.S. should try to achieve in the region.

An overview

America's Role in the Middle East uses U.S. postwar policy options as the focal point for discussing present and future policy goals. The range of views about postwar policy in the Middle East reflects differences in underlying beliefs about the proper role of the U.S. in the world and in this region.

The four options provide a starting point for discussing and thinking aloud with others about some of the choices that we as a nation will have to make. There are many approaches that the U.S. could take in the Middle East, some of them more likely than others. U.S. policy will evolve over time, as our elected officials make a series of decisions that will shape our policy direction. At this crucial time, we need to talk with our fellow citizens about what we want this direction to be. We need to look ahead so that we can have some input into this policy as it is being determined.

The four policy options presented are:
Option 1 – U.S. as Regional Superpower
Option 2 – U.S. Creates a Military Balance of Power in the Region
Option 3 – U.S. Promotes Regional and International Cooperation on Middle East Security
Option 4 – U.S. Minimizes Its Role in the Middle East

Each option takes the U.S. perspective, since that is the policy we have the responsibility and the means to affect. This does not mean that the U.S. will have complete freedom of action in the region after the war, or that it will be the only player with postwar plans. The actions of other players will affect the range of choices that we have.

"Perspectives on the Options" explains what each approach would mean for policies in the near term (immediately after the war) and the long term (over the next several years). Arguments of supporters and critics are included to assist you in deciding what you consider to be important and feasible goals, as well as worthwhile costs and risks.

Putting future events in perspective

Looking into the future always entails unknowns; in this case there are probably more than the usual share. We have just fought a war in a very complex region of the world during a transitional time in world politics. Added to these complications are the developments that we cannot foresee. Still in question are the character of Iraq's future government and the type of military presence the U.S. will maintain in the region.

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Even with these unknowns, we can still make judgments about what we desire for the U.S. postwar role in the Middle East. As you read the following options, think about their feasibility in light of different possible consequences of the war. Some think that the American and allied victory will result in increased Arab hostility toward the U.S., an enhancement of Muslim fundamentalism, and instability of moderate Arab governments. Others predict greater credibility for the U.S. within the region and greater stature for moderate Arabs. All agree that, though it is impossible to predict what will happen, we still need to think about what we as a nation want to accomplish.

Using this material

As usual with discussions of critical political issues, having some facts at your disposal helps you to discuss values and policy directions. To encourage your ease in talking about the U.S. role in this complex region, we are including some brief background reading in this packet. Be assured that discussion of this issue does not require expertise on your part.

We offer the four options in the body of this packet as guides for discussion. They are distinct from each other in important ways; together they span a broad spectrum of feasible choices. Feel comfortable "trying them on" with others. You will find that each has risks and tradeoffs. Think about your own concerns and goals. Listen to the views of others. Then come to your own considered judgment on this issue. By discussing these options you will contribute to a public discussion that is both interesting and historically important. If you find yourself feeling strongly that the U.S. should follow a certain policy, we encourage you to let your elected officials know.

AMERICA'S ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The Options in Brief

Option 1 – U.S. as Regional Superpower

After the war and for the foreseeable future, the U.S. should take the primary responsibility to guarantee order and stability in the Middle East. This will be part of our role as protector of a new world order in which aggression is no longer tolerated. Maintaining stability in this area of the world is particularly important, since the health of the world economy depends on continued access to Persian Gulf oil at reasonable prices. The U.S. is the only power with the military means to enforce this kind of order. In the immediate postwar period we will need to keep a strong military presence in the region. Since this option requires maintaining a readiness to use military force in the Middle East, we will need to sustain a military presence there over the long term as well, possibly one that includes ground troops.

Option 2 – U.S. Creates a Military Balance of Power in the Region

We should work to establish a regional military balance of power, in which no one nation can become powerful enough to dominate the region. By supplying arms or working with others to control arms supplies to the region, we would help to establish a rough equality of military force among the militarily powerful nations of the region. Each militarily weak nation should be allied with one of the stronger regional powers. With the Middle East in this kind of balanced situation no one country should be tempted to launch an attack against another. Because this balance will be internal to the region, the U.S. should not have to be part of the balancing act with its own military. This approach will require a small U.S. military presence in the region in the immediate postwar period. In the longer term, achieving this kind of balance could involve arms control efforts to maintain the balance at lower levels of weaponry, but this is not a prerequisite to this approach.

Option 3 – U.S. Promotes Regional and Global Cooperation on Middle East Security

We should work to establish regional and international cooperation concerning Middle East security. This strategy will need strong U.S. support, but its success will require the leadership of regional and international organizations. The U.S. should use its influence with Israel and with Arab states to encourage cooperation among the nations of the region. Collaboration on military security concerns could be carried out through strengthening already existing organizations (such as the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council), and through limiting arms shipments to the region through international agreements. Because of the security implications of the Palestinian question, the U.S. should encourage moves toward an Arab-Israeli dialogue. In the immediate postwar period the U.S. should encourage the United Nations and/or a pan-Arab group to establish a peace-keeping force in the region. Over time, this approach could lead to cooperation in addressing the underlying conflicts that lead to war (such as economic, social, and human rights issues).

Option 4 – U.S. Minimizes Its Role in the Middle East

We should reduce our military presence in the Middle East and begin to concentrate on our pressing economic and social problems on the home front. We don't have the resources both to

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look after ourselves as we should and to make extensive commitments around the globe. Our security guarantee to Israel is one such commitment. We should encourage Israel to find its own security solutions. We need to make sure that any future commitment of our military forces is for the purpose of protecting our direct national interests. In the immediate postwar period, we should scale down our military presence to the minimum necessary to provide physical defense of oil facilities and shipping lanes. To reach the long-term goal of minimizing our role, we should work on energy independence in order to make our intervention in Middle East politics less necessary.

AMERICA'S ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Perspectives on the Options

Option 1 – U.S. as Regional Superpower

After the war and for the foreseeable future, the U.S. should take the primary responsibility to guarantee order and stability in the Middle East. This will be part of our role as protector of a new world order in which aggression is no longer tolerated. Maintaining stability in this area of the world is particularly important, since the health of the world economy depends on continued access to Persian Gulf oil at reasonable prices. The U.S. is the only power with the military means to enforce this kind of order.

Near-term policies

In the immediate postwar period, the U.S. will have to keep a strong military presence in the region. This may require an occupation of Iraq similar to the victorious powers' occupation of Germany and Japan after World War II. A strong U.S. presence will prevent the nations of the region with strong militaries (perhaps Syria and Iran) from taking advantage of the postwar power vacuum and staking their own claims.

Long-term policies

To guarantee stability in the region over the long term, U.S. military presence will continue to be necessary. This could take the form of naval power and keeping weapons in the region (to enable our troops to go back in quickly if they are needed). It may also be necessary to keep some American ground troops there (much as we have kept ground troops in Korea since the Korean War). This kind of tangible presence in the region will be more effective than the policy that we followed in the 1970s and 80s – trying to keep the region in balance through arms sales and aid.

Supporters say:

- We will be more capable of ensuring continued access to reasonably priced oil, important for our and others' economic health.
- Our continued military presence will enhance our credibility in the world, since it signals that we remain committed to the security of the Middle East and to following through with our missions once we start them.
- We will fulfill our political and moral duty to maintain a world order in which aggression is not tolerated.
- We will be able to ensure the security of our long-time friends in the region (notably Israel and the oil-rich Arab states).
- Our strengthened role in the region will enable us to promote democracy and human rights in the region.

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Critics say:

- Over the long term, this will be very costly. Nations that have contributed financially during the war will not be likely to help pay the costs of our postwar involvement.

- A continued military presence will certainly fuel anti-American sentiment in the region and work against our interests in the long run. The governments of the oil-rich countries could easily be toppled, and new regimes would threaten our access to reasonably priced oil supplies.

- A continued military presence will not be feasible because we may not be wanted there by most nations of the region. Even our friends in the Arab world do not want us to be so visible in the region because of the anti-American sentiment it would create among their populations.

- We cannot afford to police every region of the world in this way, and it would be hypocritical to say that we are standing against aggression when we police only the regions (like this one) in which we have great economic interest.

- Strong anti-Americanism in the region resulting from this choice will make it very hard to address long-standing regional conflicts.

- By taking the primary responsibility for keeping the region secure, we will fail to capitalize on the new-found spirit of international cooperation and the new credibility and usefulness of the United Nations.

- It should not be the job of the U.S. to ensure the stability of a region so far away from home. We no longer have to worry about counteracting Soviet influence in this region, and other concerns that draw us into the region (reasonably priced oil and the security of Israel) do not require our long-term military presence.

Option 2 – U.S. Creates a Military Balance of Power in the Region

We should work to establish a regional military balance of power, in which no one nation can become powerful enough to dominate the region. By supplying arms or working with others to control arms supplies to the region, we would help to establish a rough equality of military force among the militarily powerful nations of the region. Each militarily weak nation should be allied with one of the stronger regional powers. With the Middle East in this kind of balanced situation no one country should be tempted to launch an attack against another. Because this balance will be internal to the region, the U.S. should not have to be part of the balancing act with its own military.

Near-term policies

Achieving this balance will require a small U.S. military presence in the region in the immediate postwar period. This will ensure that other countries in the region won't be tempted to take advantage of Iraq's postwar weakness by trying to take over as the dominant power in the Middle East. It will also give us a chance to influence the process of establishing the balance.

Long-term policies

In the longer term, a U.S. military presence will not be necessary. This balance among the militaries of the region could take one of two forms. If other countries of the world continue to sell and give arms to the nations of the Middle East, the U.S. should supply weapons to any nation or group of nations in the region that is becoming dangerously weak and tempting to aggressors. On the other hand, if other nations of the world agree to slow or stop arms shipments to this region, the U.S. should agree to this. However, restricting arms sales is not the main focus of this approach to security – keeping the balance is the key. Arms control is only one way to help establish a balance of power in the region, one at lower levels of weaponry. There should be one exception to our willingness to supply arms: we should insist on an international agreement not to sell components for unconventional (nuclear, biological, and chemical) weapons to this region, since such weapons by their nature are especially dangerous and destabilizing.

Supporters say:

- This is a realistic goal because it doesn't require cooperation among the nations of the region. Especially in a region with such deep conflicts, the only reason that nations will "stay in line" is the fear of being defeated on the battlefield.

- This is a realistic role for the U.S. to play because it doesn't require that we or the nations of Middle East address the long-standing and complicated conflicts there (like the Arab-Israeli disputes over the Palestinian question).

- This will require some economic commitment from the U.S. (especially in the form of military aid), but pursuing this policy will not be nearly as costly in financial terms as maintaining a permanent military presence.

- This will enable us to ensure the security of our long-time friends in the region (notably Israel and the oil-rich Arab states). Because this option does not require the presence of large, highly visible American ground troops, it will not arouse great anti-Americanism among the local populations.

• Through skillful use of arms trading and diplomacy, we will be able to attain the same goals as with a permanent presence in the region, without having all the potential problems.

Critics say:

• We tried this in the 1970s and 80s and it didn't work. This is a formula for an intense regional arms race. As each nation in the region sees its neighbors acquiring arms, it will demand more for itself – either from America or, if we refuse, from the many available suppliers.

• We overestimate our ability to "fine tune" a balance in the Middle East, a complicated region with a political and cultural history very different from our own.

• Some people, both in the region and elsewhere, will think that it is contradictory that the U.S. supplies some kinds of arms gladly while trying at the same time to control or halt the supplies of other arms (nuclear, biological, and chemical). By appearing to endorse "weapons as the best way to keep the peace" we really encourage nations to acquire *all* types of weapons (even if we don't mean to).

• By making stability in the region our primary goal, we end up supporting unsavory dictators. This will make it less likely that we will be able to promote democracy within the region.

• By taking the primary responsibility for keeping the region secure, we fail to capitalize on the new-found spirit of international cooperation and the new credibility and usefulness of the United Nations.

• It should not be the job of the U.S. to ensure the stability of a region so far away from home. We no longer have to worry about counteracting Soviet influence in this region, and other concerns that draw us into the region (reasonably priced oil and the security of Israel) are best dealt with in non-military ways.

• If the U.S. takes the responsibility to keep the region in balance, this will likely fuel anti-American sentiment and ultimately work against our interests.

• Trying to keep more than two nations "in balance" is a very difficult task because the balance can shift quickly and become unstable. This difficulty was evident when we failed to give proper attention to Iraq's growing military might before its invasion of Kuwait.

Option 3 – U.S. Promotes Regional and Global Cooperation on Middle East Security

We should work to establish regional and international cooperation concerning Middle East security. This strategy will need strong U.S. support, but its success will require the leadership of regional and international organizations. The U.S. should use its influence with Israel and with Arab states to encourage cooperation among the nations of the region. Collaboration on military security concerns could be carried out through strengthening already existing organizations (such as the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council), and through limiting arms shipments to the region through international agreements. Because of the security implications of the Palestinian question, the U.S. should encourage moves toward an Arab-Israeli dialogue. Over time, this approach could lead to cooperation in addressing the underlying conflicts that lead to war (such as economic, social, and human rights issues).

Near-term policies

In the immediate postwar period, the U.S. should encourage the United Nations and/or some pan-Arab group to establish a peacekeeping force in the region, at least in Kuwait and possibly elsewhere. The U.S. may want to keep some small military presence in the region as part of that force, but in order to avoid antagonizing large segments of the Arab population the makeup of the force should be truly multinational in character. In its initial postwar dealings in the region, the U.S. should make clear that it wants to encourage a truly regional approach to security that can be aided by the international community.

Long-term policies

Since conflicts in this region have spawned wars and threatened global security, there will be new incentives for cooperation on security issues. As the region experiences cooperation on military security, regional and international organizations will be better able to address the underlying causes of regional conflicts. Over the long term, the U.S. should encourage cooperation on non-military as well as military security aspects of regional conflicts. The two most important conflicts in the region are the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the division between oil-rich Arab nations and the poorer Arab nations of the region. The U.S. should take part as only one interested party in the international forums on these issues.

Supporters say:

- The United Nations has new clout in the world due to its role in standing against Iraqi aggression; encouraging it to play a role in the region would take advantage of this new-found capacity and further strengthen it to deal with other threats to global security as well.

- Taking this role in the region will enable us to champion a new world order in which respect for international law and cooperation (regional and global) in enforcing international law would help keep the peace. It is better that regional Arab organizations and the U.N. prevent aggression than that the U.S. should take on this burden.

- By encouraging the world and the region to deal with the underlying conflicts in the Middle East, we will weaken incentives to buy and sell arms as a way to gain security. It is in America's interests that conflicts in the region be settled by means other than arms if possible; it is also in America's interest that any wars that do occur be less violent because of fewer arms in the region.

• Taking this role in the region will help the U.S. and all nations to collaborate on other issues besides preventing war – such as economic, social, and human rights concerns. This approach would be consistent with our concern over Iraq's aggression toward Kuwait and would enhance our credibility in the world by making our foreign policy more consistent with our human rights concerns.

• This cooperative approach will minimize any American military commitments or involvements in the region, both in the near and long terms. The U.S. will not need to do more than "back up" U.N. and Arab security arrangements that will usually succeed by themselves.

Critics say:

• Any motivation for cooperation among the nations of the region that existed before the war started will be gone in the bitter postwar atmosphere. No international or regional organization will have the support or strength it would take to build a regional consensus or enforce cooperation.

• Encouraging consideration of the issues of wealth and poverty within the Arab world will not be feasible. The Gulf war has deepened the hostilities between the rich and poor Arab states.

• Encouraging any consideration of the Palestinian issue will likely lead to a situation that threatens the security of Israel, our long-time friend and ally. Besides, the Gulf war has only widened the gap between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

• It will be difficult if not impossible to limit conventional arms shipments to this volatile region in which so many countries have an interest.

• By encouraging the leadership of regional and international organizations, we would be giving up our say in the region. We have gained the ability to speak for ourselves at great cost, and we should not give it away.

• If we give up so much of our voice to regional and international organizations, we will not be able to guarantee the protection of our own vital interests in the region.

Option 4 – U.S. Minimizes its Role in the Middle East

We should reduce our military presence in the Middle East and begin to concentrate on our pressing economic and social problems on the home front. We don't have the resources both to look after ourselves as we should and to make extensive commitments around the globe. Our security guarantee to Israel is one such commitment. We should encourage Israel to find its own security solutions. We need to make sure that any future commitment of our military forces is for the purpose of protecting our direct national interests.

Near-term policies

In the immediate postwar period, we should scale down our military presence to the minimum necessary to provide physical defense of oil facilities and shipping lanes. Other issues regarding the region, such as whether to hold an international or regional conference on the Middle East, should be left up to the nations in the region that would be directly affected.

Long-term policies

To reach the long-term goal of minimizing our role, we should work to make our intervention in Middle East politics less necessary. While we could continue to sell arms to the Israelis and give them some military aid, we should let them know that we will not be able to come to their defense. On the oil issue, we should begin a national program for becoming as energy-independent as possible. Now that the Cold War is over, we no longer have the responsibility to protect oil supplies for Europe and Japan. In this changing world, they are our chief economic competitors.

Supporters say:

- This will enable us to take care of pressing economic, educational, housing, and health problems here in the U.S. by freeing our attention and budget from extraneous international commitments.

- This approach could open the way to the region beginning to solve its own problems. The Arabs especially often ask the West to leave them alone to find "Arab solutions to Arab problems."

- If we work to make ourselves less vulnerable to the Middle East, we will not have to go in with our military even if another war were to occur there. (Some say that our vital interests were not threatened even before the Gulf war, since whoever owns the oil will have to sell it at a reasonable price.)

- Now that the Cold War is over, the chances are greater that the region won't be subject to external meddling. We won't need to counteract Soviet influence, because the Soviets are much weaker and will be busy taking care of their own domestic situation.

- If we take this kind of approach to all the regions of the world, we can reduce our military forces (and budget) dramatically and receive a true peace dividend.

Critics say:

- We are affected by other countries in the world even when we are not committed to formal alliances. To protect our own interests, we need to be involved around the world.

- Access to oil at reasonable prices would be in our interest even if the U.S. itself were completely energy-independent, since it affects the health of the world economy of which we are a part.

- As a great power with a large military and many resources, we would be shirking our responsibilities if we were not constructively involved with the rest of the world, especially in promoting democracy and helping to keep the peace.

- Our security guarantee to Israel represents a long-standing and important commitment and should not be dropped. The security of Israel, a friend and a democracy that is surrounded by enemies, is important to us.

- If we take a minimal role in the region, other nations of the world will take advantage of this power vacuum and advance their own interests at our expense.

- If we take a minimal role, we will give up our opportunity to promote international cooperation on a variety of global issues like this one.

- If the U.S. withdraws from involvement in the region it will be interpreted around the world as a sign of weakness. That will reinforce the growing notion that America is "in decline" by suggesting that we no longer are strong enough to carry burdens that we once carried easily.

Suggestions for Participants

The goal of a study circle is not to learn a lot of facts, or to attain group consensus, but rather to deepen each person's understanding of the issue. This can occur in a focused discussion when people exchange views freely and consider a variety of viewpoints. The process – democratic discussion among equals – is as important as the content.

The following points are intended to help you make the most of your study circle experience and to suggest ways in which you can help the group.

• **Listen carefully to others.** Make sure you are giving everyone the chance to speak.

• **Maintain an open mind.** You don't score points by rigidly sticking to your early statements. Feel free to explore ideas that you have rejected or failed to consider in the past.

• **Strive to understand the position of those who disagree with you.** Your own knowledge is not complete until you understand other participants' points of view and why they feel the way they do. It is important to respect people who disagree with you; they have reasons for their beliefs. You should be able to make a good case for positions you disagree with. This level of comprehension and empathy will make you a much better advocate for whatever position you come to.

• **Help keep the discussion on track.** Make sure your remarks are relevant; if necessary, explain how your points are related to the discussion. Try to make your points while they are pertinent.

• **Speak your mind freely, but don't monopolize the discussion.** If you tend to talk a lot in groups, leave room for quieter people. Be aware that some people may want to speak but are intimidated by more assertive people.

• **Address your remarks to the group rather than the leader.** Feel free to address your remarks to a particular participant, especially one who has not been heard from or who you think may have special insight. Don't hesitate to question other participants to learn more about their ideas.

• **Communicate your needs to the leader.** The leader is responsible for guiding the discussion, summarizing key ideas, and soliciting clarification of unclear points, but he/she may need advice on when this is necessary. Chances are you are not alone when you don't understand what someone has said.

• **Value your own experience and opinions.** Everyone in the group, including you, has unique knowledge and experience; this variety makes the discussion an interesting learning experience for all. Don't feel pressured to speak, but realize that failing to speak means robbing the group of your wisdom.

• **Engage in friendly disagreement.** Differences can invigorate the group, especially when it is relatively homogeneous on the surface. Don't hesitate to challenge ideas you disagree with. Don't be afraid to play devil's advocate, but don't go overboard. If the discussion becomes heated, ask yourself and others whether reason or emotion is running the show.

• **Remember that humor and a pleasant manner can go far in helping you make your points.** A belligerent attitude may prevent acceptance of your assertions. Be aware of how your body language can close you off from the group.

Current Problems in the Middle East: A Brief History

Now that the war in the Persian Gulf has ended, Americans have an opportunity to consider the shape of the U.S. role in the Middle East for years to come. In order to reach a lasting peace, whatever role the United States chooses to play, certain long-standing issues in the region will persist and will need to be addressed. The following pages give a brief overview of the origins of some long-term threats to stability in the postwar Middle East.

Arab Frustration

First it is important to understand the view of the Arabs with and against whom we have been fighting. Throughout the Gulf war, Saddam Hussein urged other Arabs to protest what he viewed as U.S. attempts to dominate the Middle East. To a degree he was successful. Pictures of rioting Arabs burning U.S. flags often filled the U.S. news. Americans have long been targets of terrorist acts and hostage-takings in the Middle East. Why is there so much anti-Americanism in the Arab world?

Colonialism

After World War I, most parts of the Middle East were controlled politically by the British or the French. The colonial powers either ruled indirectly, by imposing their policies through cooperative local leaders, or directly by British or French-run governments. The Western rulers used this political control in part to gain access to Middle Eastern oil. They located petroleum reserves and made huge fortunes drilling them. Many Arabs resented the presence of foreigners who lived in luxury from the sale of local oil, while the native population, which did not receive much of the oil profits, remained very poor. Arabs also resented the Westerners' political control.

The United States, unlike Britain and France, never had formal control over any of the Middle Eastern countries. In fact, immediately following World War II, the U.S. sympathized with local citizens in their desire to run their own affairs. Soon, however, Americans began to worry that communists would come to power in the Middle East; therefore, the U.S. began to take a more active role in the region. In 1953 in Iran for example, the CIA helped the unpopular but anti-communist Shah (King) retain power and Americans helped train his secret police. People in the region condemned this Western intervention into domestic Middle Eastern politics. In addition, many Iranians, victims of the secret police, opposed the Shah and resented the United States for backing his government.

Fundamentalism

Fundamentalism, a return to traditional religious and cultural values, has become a powerful political force in the Middle East.

American economic and cultural influence across the globe has angered traditional Muslims who see the entire world, including many younger Muslims, adopting Western cultural and business practices at the expense of Eastern ones. In addition, the respect and envy some Muslims feel for the West increases the threat traditional Muslim leaders feel from the West. These more traditional Arabs' fundamentalist beliefs represent their desire to protect their world from Western cultural domination. Islam also represents a way for Arabs to fight the political corruption and economic over-dependence on U.S. aid that plague many Arab regimes. Fundamentalist political candidates promising to fight these problems have won parliamentary posts in Jordan, Egypt, and Algeria.

A Project of:
The Study Circles Resource Center of the Topsfield Foundation
in cooperation with
The Choices Education Project of the Center for Foreign Policy Development at Brown University

During the reign of the last Shah, Iranians who were opposed the Shah and his Western backers were allowed little political expression of their views. As a result, many Iranians could only speak out in their mosques, and Islam became a powerful political force in Iran. In 1979, Islamic fundamentalists, led by the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, overthrew the Shah and came to power. Radicals in the new regime took over the U.S. embassy and held U.S. diplomats hostage for more than a year. Khomeini was popular among many people throughout the Muslim world for having turned the tables on Western forces, which had so long controlled Middle Eastern affairs.

Pan-Arabism

Some Arabs have also sought to overcome Western political manipulation by banding together. These pan-Arabists assert that the people of the region can best solve their own disputes and that states in the Middle East should govern themselves without outside intervention.

Arab leaders have found public support at home by calling for Arab independence from the West, as Egypt's President Gamal Abdul Nasser did. He called on all Arabs to join him in a pan-Arab alliance which would not be dependent on Western powers. In 1956 he went as far as taking over the British-owned Suez Canal and enduring attacks by the British, French, and Israelis, so that Egyptians could profit from the waterway located in their country. Nasser succeeded in keeping the canal and became a great hero in the Arab world for opposing the West. Today, many observers feel that Saddam Hussein's goal in standing up to the United States, and to the U.S.-backed Israel, was to be a second Nasser. And although many Arabs united in the coalition against Iraq, Saddam Hussein did gain a widespread following among Palestinians and Jordanians for his anti-Western actions.

Arab Relations with the United States

The anti-American feeling among Arabs has also made it dangerous for Arab leaders to be seen as clients, or tools, of the United States. In 1981, after Egyptian president Anwar Sadat signed a U.S.-backed treaty with Israel, he was assassinated by a citizen of his own country. Present Egyptian leader Hosni Mubarak has also faced criticism from people in his country for supporting the U.S.-led coalition against Iraq. Many Arab leaders have been hesitant to openly grant the U.S. any kind of permanent military access to their countries. Even the Saudis, who invited the U.S. to come and protect them after Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, have stated clearly that the U.S. presence in Saudi Arabia is not permanent.

On the other hand, U.S. intervention has been beneficial to some Arab states. The United States has come to the defense of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, substantial American aid has supported Egypt's sagging economy, and U.S. diplomacy helped the Egyptians to break a costly cycle of wars with Israel. The United States has long supplied many countries in the Middle East with weapons to defend themselves and, during the Iran-Iraq war, the U.S. protected Kuwaiti oil tankers from attack. These positive steps by the United States, however, have often been overshadowed by Arab distrust of Western intervention in the region.

The Arab-Israeli Conflict

A major source of Arab-American differences lies in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israel receives more U.S. aid than any other country—three billion dollars every year. U.S.-Israeli political and military ties are equally strong. The United States has air-lifted supplies and provided back-up support to Israel during its wars with its Arab neighbors. Thus, Arabs view U.S. and Israeli interests as the same.

But what exactly is the Arab-Israeli conflict? This conflict stems from competing claims to a piece of land—today's Israel. Until the mid-1800s, the land, then known as Palestine, was part of the Ottoman Empire and was inhabited by Arabs, most of whom were Muslims. As the century progressed, European Jews began immigrating to the area to escape the anti-Semitism they faced at home. Jews chose Palestine as a destination because of the religious importance of the region.

By World War I, Jews made up 12-14% of Palestine's population. The Arabs resented the Jewish settlers who were moving onto their lands. Meanwhile, the Jews, in order to protect themselves from anti-Semitism, wanted to establish a Jewish state and not one ruled by Muslim, or even secular, laws. As a result, the two groups had difficulty living side by side and often competed for jobs and resources.

After Turkey's defeat in World War I and the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Palestine was given to the British with the understanding that it would eventually receive independence. In the 1930s and during World War II, thousands of European Jews fled to the area to escape Nazi control. After the war was over, the newly formed United Nations was given the task of deciding the shape of an independent Palestine. The UN ultimately developed a plan to divide Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states, with Jerusalem under international administration. It was divided into many small Arab and Jewish provinces. In some of the "Jewish" areas there were more Arabs than Jews. Jewish leaders complained that these many small Jewish areas would be surrounded by hostile Arabs and difficult to defend. On the other hand, Arabs were outraged that the plan took what had long been Arab land and gave it to the recently-arrived Jewish settlers.

Jewish leaders feared that Palestine's Arab neighbors would try to capture the lands given to Jews by the UN plan. Thus, Jewish soldiers militarily overtook many Arab regions of Palestine. In May 1948, Jewish leaders declared an independent Jewish state—Israel. Israel's Arab neighbors were stunned by what they viewed as naked aggression against Palestinian Arabs and angry that the UN subsequently recognized Israel as a legitimate state. In protest, Arab states refused to recognize Israel and declared war on it. This war confirmed the Israelis' fears that their state was surrounded by hostile countries.

The Palestinians

Less than a year later, Jewish forces occupied 80% of Palestine and the fighting stopped. Hostility between Israel and its neighbors—Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan—did not cease, however. Arab-Israeli wars were fought in 1956, 1967, and 1973. One of the main sources of contention between the two sides was the plight of Palestinian Arabs who had lost their homes during the war. Israel claimed that these Palestinians had voluntarily fled and abandoned their homes. In addition, Israelis maintained, Israel was the only Jewish state in the Middle East—if the Palestinians wanted a homeland, they should go to a neighboring Arab state. The Arabs, on the other hand, maintained that the Palestinians had been forcibly removed by a war that Israel had started. Palestinians wanted their homes back as well as access to important Muslim sites in Jerusalem.

As the dispute continued, over 1.5 million refugees were left homeless and most were sent to UN camps with poor living conditions. The Palestinians were concentrated in three territories: the Golan Heights near Syria, the West Bank near Jordan, and the Gaza Strip near Egypt. Today these territories are occupied by Israeli forces that moved into the areas during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

The Palestinian refugee problem remains, as does the state of war between most Arab states and Israel. (After the 1973 war, Israel and Egypt—with the help of U.S. diplomats—reached a peace settlement.) Palestinians protest the impoverished conditions in the refugee camps and the Israeli military occupation of these areas. They decry the curfews, the closing of schools, the job discrimination, and the police brutality which Palestinians have experienced under Israeli occupation. Until 1988, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) has encouraged terrorism against Israel and its ally, the United States, to protest the Palestinians' situation. Since 1987, refugees living in the Israeli-occupied territories have held a series of uprisings, called the *intifadeh*, attacking Israeli soldiers with rocks and broken bottles.

The fundamentally conflicting demands of each side have made diplomacy difficult. Before the Gulf war began, Israel's policy was "no land for peace"—that is, Israel's conservative Likud government refused to give the Palestinians a homeland in exchange for an end to the *intifadeh*. The U.S. government backed Israel in this stance. The Palestinians, on the other hand, refused to give up their struggle until they

received guarantees of a homeland. The PLO was frustrated because it had recognized the state of Israel in 1988 and the Israelis had not responded with a willingness to negotiate.

The conflict between the two sides deepened when the Persian Gulf war began in January 1991. The Palestinians supported Saddam Hussein, who launched missiles at Israel. But Saddam Hussein's military loss left him unable to defend the Palestinian cause and the refugees remain under Israeli control. In addition, the Palestinians also lost important backing from moderate Arab states, like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, for opposing the anti-Iraq coalition. Although the Palestinians are now weakened, their lack of homeland is still a major problem in Middle Eastern politics. It will be difficult for Israel and the Arabs to work toward a peace settlement on the Palestinian issue. On the other hand, many agree that if there is to be lasting peace in the Middle East, Israel will need to address the Palestinian issue and the Arabs will need to accept their Jewish neighbor.

The U.S. has strongly supported Israel since its independence. Although the U.S. has had only extremely limited contact with the PLO, and cut ties to the organization in early 1990, it does have strong connections to many Arab states, including Egypt. Some observers feel that only the U.S. can put enough pressure on all sides to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Economic Disparity

Although most Arab nations oppose Israel and many Arabs harbor anti-American feelings, there are many great differences within the Arab world—especially economic ones.

Before the twentieth century, there was no widespread wealth in the region. With the discovery of oil in the Middle East, and the increasing demand for petroleum, however, some Middle Eastern states came into possession of resources that could make them rich. As British and French oil companies began to withdraw from the region, more and more oil revenue went directly to some Arab states. These countries, including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, and Oman, in addition to the non-Gulf states Venezuela, Brunei, Ecuador, and Nigeria, joined together in an economic alliance called Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). This organization has tried to control the price of oil exported to Western states. In the 1970s, because Western countries were so dependent on this oil and because world oil prices were high, OPEC wielded a great deal of power. During the 1980s, world oil prices fell and this influence was reduced.

On the other hand, many Arab states—such as Egypt, Syria, and Jordan—have had limited or no access to vast oil wealth. This has resulted in great economic differences within the Arab world. Kuwait's per capita GNP was $13,680 in 1988, while Egypt's was only $650. In addition, economic conditions in the poorer Arab states are tied to those in richer ones. Poor countries like Jordan are densely populated and have often sent workers to refineries in oil-rich countries. When the price of petroleum falls, as it did before the Gulf war, these guest workers are sent home, unemployed, to their home countries, which must support them. Rich states, on the other hand, are underpopulated and, when guest workers are sent away, can take care of their citizens well, even during hard times.

This economic disparity has caused widespread envy and anger among Arabs. Thus, many Arabs were sympathetic when Iraq, a relatively poor state with a per capita GNP of $1950, invaded wealthy Kuwait. Some people agree that if the postwar Middle East is to be a stable place, the grossly unequal distribution of wealth in the area will need to be addressed. Others would opt for at least keeping the resentments it creates in check.

The Middle Eastern Arms Race

Clearly, between the Arab-Israeli conflict and inter-Arab disputes, the Middle East is a tension-filled region. This tension has led to an arms race that has made the region even more unstable.

Before the war began, Iraq had the fourth

largest military in the world, with Israel, Syria, and Egypt not far behind. Even moderate Middle Eastern states like Saudi Arabia spend 20% of their country's gross national product on arms, as opposed to NATO countries, which spend only 3-4% of their GNP on weapons. In addition, there are chemical, biological, and nuclear arsenals in the Middle East that threaten to kill not only soldiers but civilians as well. Where did these weapons come from and how can they be eliminated?

There are essentially three arms races in the region. First, the Arabs and the Israelis have been trying to out-arm each other since 1948. And, although Israel is alone in a sea of Arab states, many Arab countries do not trust each other (for example Syria and Iraq) and thus believe they must each be able to defeat the well-equipped Israelis alone. Second, Iran and Iraq spent most of the 1980s arming themselves during their eight-year war. Finally, the oil-rich Gulf states like Saudi Arabia have been arming themselves against an attack from either Iran or Iraq.

In the past, this dangerous rush for weapons has been fueled by the U.S.-Soviet Cold War rivalry. Each superpower has tried to arm Middle Eastern states in hopes of gaining a Cold War ally. For example, the U.S. has given extensive support to the anti-communist Israelis for years. Superpower attempts at buying friendship, however, have not always worked. Although the Soviet Union gave millions of dollars worth of weapons and aid to Egypt, the Egyptian president Anwar Sadat expelled all Soviet military advisors in 1972 and turned to the United States. Similarly, the U.S.-armed Shah of Iran was overthrown, and U.S.-made weapons were used to hold American diplomats hostage. These failures, combined with the apparent end to the Cold War, may mean that the U.S. and Soviet governments may be less likely to try to arm Middle Eastern states.

On the other hand, many Middle Eastern countries are wealthy and can pay high prices for weapons. It will be very difficult to convince private arms merchants to stay away from these clients. The Soviet Union and China may prove to be even more difficult to control because arms sales are one of the most profitable sectors of their struggling economies. While private arms sales can be regulated by government intervention, it is difficult to regulate the sales of independent states.

Also, Israel is widely believed to possess nuclear weapons, and as a result, it will be almost impossible to convince Arab states that they can be secure without owning these weapons themselves. In fact, the entire web of hostility that is woven among Middle Eastern nations will make it very hard to reduce the number of weapons in the area. On the other hand, the turbulent nature of the region makes arms control all the more imperative.

Iraq's Future

Although the Middle Eastern arms race is dangerous, some observers believe that it is dangerous to allow any one state to become *too* weak. Some observers fear that if Iraq is left extremely battered, its neighbors may try to take over parts of it.

Iraq has had a long-standing dispute with its neighbor Syria and Syrian leader Hafez al-Assad. Both Syria and Iraq are officially governed by Baath parties. Baathism, which originated in Syria and first came to power in Iraq, combines socialism and Arab nationalism into a political ideology. Assad and Saddam Hussein each claim to be the true leader of the international Baathist party and have been bitter enemies for years. The extent of the dictators' competition was seen when Assad wholeheartedly joined the coalition against Hussein. If Iraq is left in a weakened state after the war, Assad may very well attempt to take over all or part of his Baathist rival's country.

Iran may also present a danger to post-war Iraq. Saddam Hussein, whose Baath party is officially a secular one, has been one of the leading opponents of Iran's fundamentalist government. This has to do, in part, with religious differences among Muslims. Much as Christians can be either Protestant or Catholic, Muslims can be Shiite or Sunni. The government in Iran is controlled by Shiite Muslims who form a majority of the population both there and in Iraq. In Iraq, however, Shiites have very little power because Saddam Hussein's government is

controlled by Sunnis. In fact, Shiites have been treated as second class citizens in Iraq. Thus, inspired by Iran's former leader, Shiite Ayatollah Khomeini, many Iraqi Shiites protested Saddam Hussein's government in the early 1980s. This threat to his regime, combined with a dispute over a common waterway, led to a bloody, eight-year war between Iran and Iraq. The two sides publically resolved their differences after Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait and Iran remained neutral during the Gulf war. However, Iran remains governed by fundamentalist Shiites and Iraq by a Baathist Sunni. Westerners and non-fundamentalist Arab leaders alike fear that, after the war, Iran may try to take advantage of Iraq's weakness to either take over part of the country or to propel a Shiite fundamentalist leader into power.

Iraq's neighbor Turkey will also be very interested in the outcome of the Gulf war. Both Iraq and Turkey have large Kurdish populations. In the past, Kurds have demanded an independent homeland called Kurdistan, which would encompass parts of Iraq and Turkey. Saddam Hussein responded to these calls for independence by using poison gas to kill Kurdish people and destroy their villages. Now that Saddam Hussein has been weakened, and the world made aware of his past atrocities toward the Kurds, the Kurds may be able to demand a new role in the post-war Iraq. If Iraqi Kurds were to receive special rights—for example, an independent state and control over some Iraqi oil—it could lead to massive unrest among Turkish Kurds. Some observers believe that in such a situation Turkey might try to take over Mosul, the Kurdish part of Iraq, in order to silence the Kurds.

Even if outside states do not intervene in Iraq, Shiites, Kurds, and other dissatisfied portions of the Iraqi population may rise up to protest Saddam Hussein's rule in the post-war chaos. In the days immediately following the cease-fire, returning soldiers caused uprisings in several Iraqi cities.

Future Western Involvement

One final question for Americans to consider is the extent of Western involvement in the region after the war. Should American troops remain in the region? Should the United States press for democratic reforms in the Middle East? All of these problems warrant attention in the post-war Gulf. With this background in mind, it is now up to you to discuss with your classmates the best possible course for the United States to take.

Published March 5, 1991.

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THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, JANUARY 20, 1991 E1

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What the United States Has Taken On In the Gulf, Besides a War

By THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

WASHINGTON

IT takes a long time to plan a war, but it takes an even longer time to design a peace. Many people are already beginning to ask: If the anti-Iraq coalition emerges victorious from this conflict, what will the peace look like and how long will the United States have to remain heavily involved in the Persian Gulf?

In the wake of any American victory, Washington's political influence in the region could be greater than at any other time in the postwar era. Even before the war, Soviet involvement in the Middle East was on the wane, or, as Saddam Hussein derisively put it, Moscow had pulled a "disappearing act." It is quite possible that when the smoke clears America will find itself the only superpower in the Middle East and its greatest enemy might well be the illusions that naturally attend victory — illusions about how much any outside power can reorder an ancient region that has so long defied reordering.

Administration officials are the first to admit that they have done relatively little thinking about the shape of peace in the Persian Gulf, largely because the focus of all of their energy since Aug. 2 has been on building the diplomatic and military coalition to confront Iraq. Now that diplomacy has failed and it has come to war, though, Administration planners have thought about peace at least enough to conclude that "victory," in their eyes, will consist of at least five elements.

The Elements of Victory

Although the Administration has never said it out loud, the first element is the total destruction of Iraq's military infrastructure, weapons development factories, missile sites and as many tanks, airplanes and artillery pieces as possible. The goal is to render Iraq unable to project power beyond its borders for years to come. The unprovoked Iraqi missile attacks on Israeli cities last week drove home the point to anyone who might have doubted it that Iraq under its present leadership is an outlaw state that will stop at nothing and therefore must be destroyed militarily — irrespective of whether it gets out of Kuwait. Even if Mr. Hussein promised to get out of Kuwait tomorrow, the coalition probably would not stop bombing.

The second element of any victory, officials say, is a total and complete Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, so that the 12 United Nations resolutions calling for this outcome will have been implemented. Historians may question whether it was ever right for the Bush Administration to make the "liberation of Kuwait" a prime war aim, instead of focusing exclusively on dismantling Iraq's offensive military capabilities, which, after all, were the real threat to stability in the gulf and therefore the real threat to American interests. Nevertheless, having made the restoration of the Emir to his throne in Kuwait a prime objective, the United States cannot now content itself with devastating Iraq and simply ignoring who rules Kuwait. The credibility of the United Nations and the United States is at stake.

The third element, Administration officials say, would have to be a new, stable balance of power in the gulf. Historically, there have been two regional powers, and two regional powers only, in the Persian Gulf: Iran and Iraq. These are the only countries in the neighborhood that have a large enough population, with sufficient economic resources and educational advancement to be able to develop potent armies. Saudi Arabia, for example, has the money and the advanced weapons, but unlike Iraq or Iran it could never put a million men under arms.

Given these realities the rules of geopolitics in that region have been very simple. When Iran and Iraq are fighting each other, everyone else is relaxed. When one dominates the other, everyone else must live in fear. Most recently, countries such as Kuwait wanted the Americans to act as a counterbalance by sitting just over the horizon. That strategy was exposed as bankrupt by Saddam Hussein when he crushed Kuwait, precisely because he knew the Americans were over the horizon and believed they were not about to budge.

In the wake of this war — again, assuming victory by the American-led coalition — some outside power is going to have to sit indefinitely on the horizon to make sure that Iran does not take advantage of the power vacuum in Iraq to reassert dominance. And that power will have to make certain that a wounded and embittered Iraq does not lash out at its neighbors in ways that might not necessarily be life-threatening but could nevertheless be highly destabilizing.

Guess who that power is going to be? Secretary of State James A. Baker 3d has already warned, repeatedly, that the United States would have to help develop some stabilizing "security structure" in the aftermath of war. This structure would require the presence of American ground troops, air units and naval units, possibly for months, maybe for several years. Washington would hope to remove its ground forces from Saudi Arabia and from the Kuwait-Iraq border as soon as possible, and have them replaced either by an Arab League force, a force from the Gulf Cooperation Council or a United Nations peacekeeping force, with the Americans sitting offshore on naval vessels.

American officials once thought of this structure almost like a Middle Eastern NATO, but in the last few months they have learned how hard it is to build an anti-Iraq coalition from shy Arab states with their constantly shifting alliances.

So rather than a single structure, American officials now envisage a series of bilateral relationships between the United States and Saudi Arabia, between Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries, such as Egypt, and between the gulf states and themselves. The idea is to develop a muscle that is militarily strong enough to check Iran and Iraq, while politically invisible enough not to leave its members open to charges that they are lackeys of the West. This network of alliances would have to keep Iraq weak enough not to threaten its neighbors, but not so weak that Syria, Turkey or Iran begin to prey upon it.

Another element of this military balance, Secretary Baker has already said, would involve a United Nations arms embargo to keep Iraq from acquiring new chemical, biological or nuclear weapons or missiles.

American officials insist that this security arrangement would have an economic component as well. That means serious pressure from Washington on Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the other Arab gulf states to share their wealth more with their poor Arab neighbors. "Saddam really touched a hot button with his economic arguments," said Ghassan Salameh, a Lebanese political scientist at the University of Paris. "There can be no stable balance of power in the gulf without a redistribution of wealth."

The fourth element of victory, in the American view, would be the restoration of oil prices to reasonable levels. Since the war started, crude oil prices have fallen to their lowest levels since midsummer — below $20 a barrel. Economists say that if the fall is maintained, it should restore consumer spending power and generate funds for business investment, as well as give the Federal Reserve more room to reduce interest rates in an effort to fight the recession.

"Victory in oil terms is very complex," said Thomas A. Petrie, chairman of Petrie Parkman & Company, a Denver-based oil company. On the one hand, he said, it is important that Iraq be militarily defeated so that it cannot in the future intimidate Saudi Arabia and Kuwait into pushing oil prices way up. On the other hand, it is important that Saudi Arabia and Kuwait do not feel a need to overproduce after the war in order to punish Iraq by keeping prices low and Iraq out of the market.

"It would be in our long-term interest to see oil prices at levels equal to, if not slightly higher than, they were before the war," Mr. Petrie said. "Prices that are too low simply stimulate our own demand and consumption. Prices slightly higher than $20 a barrel would be both affordable and enable us to make a smooth transition to a mix of different energies and also reduce our dependence on foreign oil."

But how much energy will the American people have for managing such a victory, should it come — particularly when America's "vital interests" in the region are being redefined? For the past 40 years the United States has defined the free flow of oil at reasonable prices from the Persian Gulf to Western Europe and Japan as a vital interest. The United States was not particularly dependent on Persian Gulf oil, but its European and Japanese allies were. As the leader of the Western alliance, the United States felt it had a vital interest in guaranteeing the economic viability and stability of its major allies so that they could help defend the free world against the Soviet threat. But if the Soviets are no longer seen as a threat, how long will the American people consider it their vital interest to maintain a free flow of oil to Japan, especially if Japan uses that oil to surpass the United States industrially?

One burden of victory will be intensified pressure on the United States to address the Palestinian-Israeli dispute. Politically speaking, all of the Arab states that have aligned themselves with the West against Saddam Hussein will be under pressure to prove to their Arab audiences that they are as concerned about the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait as they are about the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. But settling the Palestinian-Israeli dispute has already been made more difficult by the Iraqi missile strikes on Israel and the way in which it was applauded by Palestinians in Jordan and in the Palestine Liberation Organization.

"Saddam's missile attack and the Palestinian response has undone everything positive which the last three years of Palestinian-Israeli contacts might have produced," said the Israeli political theorist Yaron Ezrahi. "The conflict is once again about existence, not about where the border between us should be. To sit here in my house in a sealed room, looking at my elderly father, my wife and my children through a gas mask, and knowing that the Palestinians are applauding means to me that there is no future for coexistence here. It undercuts every Palestinian claim that they are prepared to live with Israel."

> A new balance of power would require keeping Iraq weak, but not helpless against predatory rivals.

As for his views, President Bush said last week: "When all this is over we want to be the healers. We want to do what we can to facilitate what I might optimistically call a 'new world order,' but that new world order should have a conciliatory component to it. It should say to those countries that are on the other side at this juncture, and there aren't many of them, 'Look, you're part of this new world order. You can play an important part in seeing that the world can live at peace in the Middle East and elsewhere.'"

But this war was never about healing. It was about checking a well-armed local despot who was making a bid for regional supremacy, and who broke all the local rules along the way. This war was never about competing visions for the future of the Arab world. It was about a thief who had to be stopped, and since the Arabs could not stop him alone they had to call in the West. Therefore victory in this war will likely produce little euphoria among the victors, only relief. For the Arabs, it will be a relief once the status quo has been restored, with a more stable balance of power, and a less dangerous Iraq. And for American soldiers it will be a relief that they can leave this region.

"Let's not forget something," remarked Mark Heller, a visiting Middle East expert at the Canadian Institute For International Peace and Security, "The challenge Saddam Hussein has posed is not typical of the challenges the United States has confronted in the Middle East and the response of the United States is not typical of its involvement in the area. Both are historical aberrations. So don't look for America to now be running the Middle East and don't look for the problems there to continue to take the Iraqi form. The indigenous problems there are still there and will still be there. Before we start proclaiming a new world order in the Middle East, let's not forget that a lot of the old order will still survive this war."

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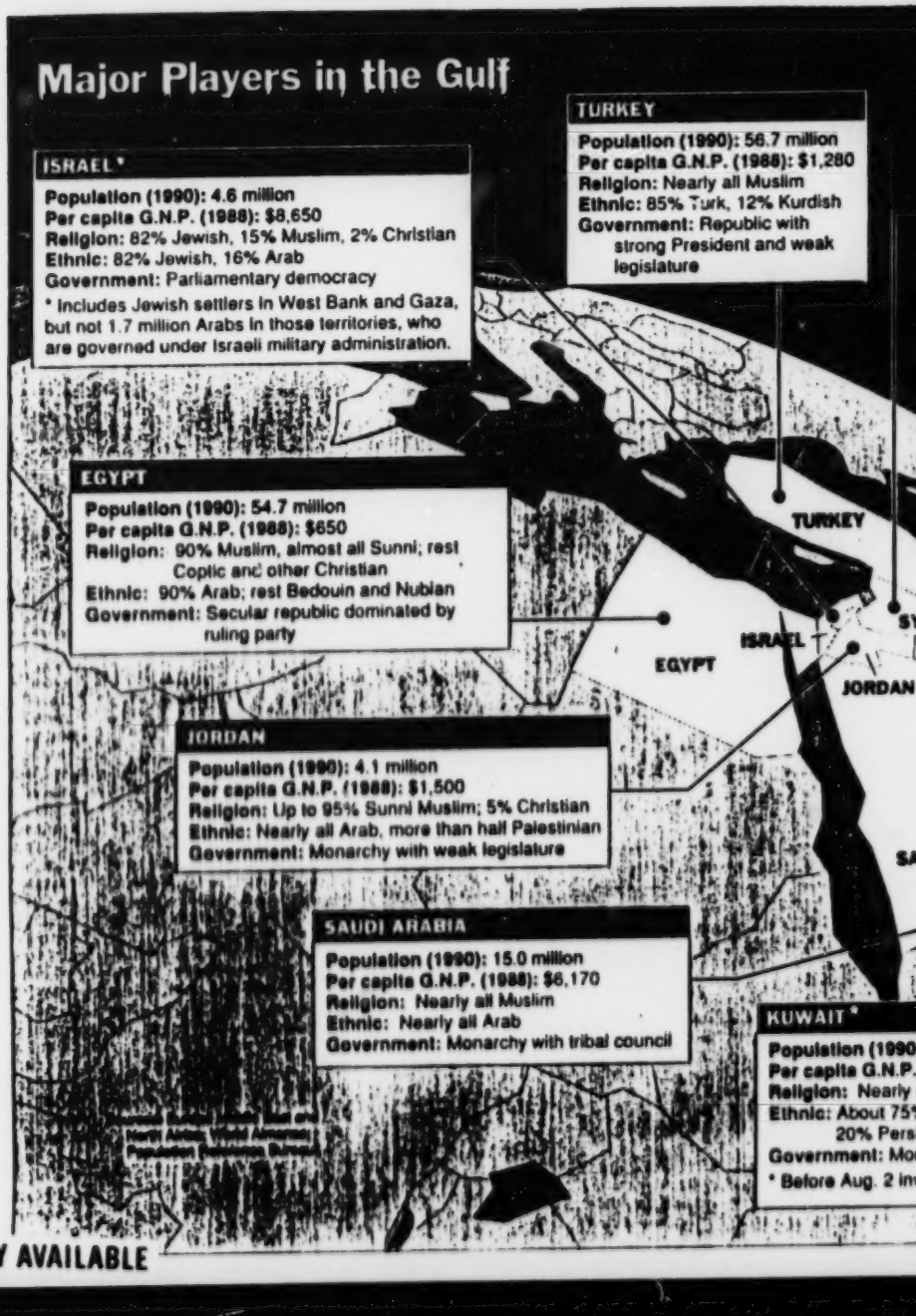
Major Players in the Gulf
TURKEY
Population (1990): 56.7 million
Per capita G.N.P. (1988): $1,280
Religion: Nearly all Muslim
Ethnic: 85% Turk, 12% Kurdish
Government: Republic with strong President and weak legislature
ISRAEL*
Population (1990): 4.6 million
Per capita G.N.P. (1988): $8,650
Religion: 82% Jewish, 15% Muslim, 2% Christian
Ethnic: 82% Jewish, 16% Arab
Government: Parliamentary democracy
* Includes Jewish settlers in West Bank and Gaza, but not 1.7 million Arabs in those territories, who are governed under Israeli military administration.
EGYPT
Population (1990): 54.7 million
Per capita G.N.P. (1988): $650
Religion: 90% Muslim, almost all Sunni; rest Coptic and other Christian
Ethnic: 90% Arab; rest Bedouin and Nubian
Government: Secular republic dominated by ruling party
JORDAN
Population (1990): 4.1 million
Per capita G.N.P. (1988): $1,500
Religion: Up to 95% Sunni Muslim; 5% Christian
Ethnic: Nearly all Arab, more than half Palestinian
Government: Monarchy with weak legislature
SAUDI ARABIA
Population (1990): 15.0 million
Per capita G.N.P. (1988): $6,170
Religion: Nearly all Muslim
Ethnic: Nearly all Arab
Government: Monarchy with tribal council
KUWAIT*
Population (1990
Per capita G.N.P.
Religion: Nearly
Ethnic: About 75
20% Pers
Government: Mo
* Before Aug. 2 in
TURKEY
ISRAEL
EGYPT
JORDAN

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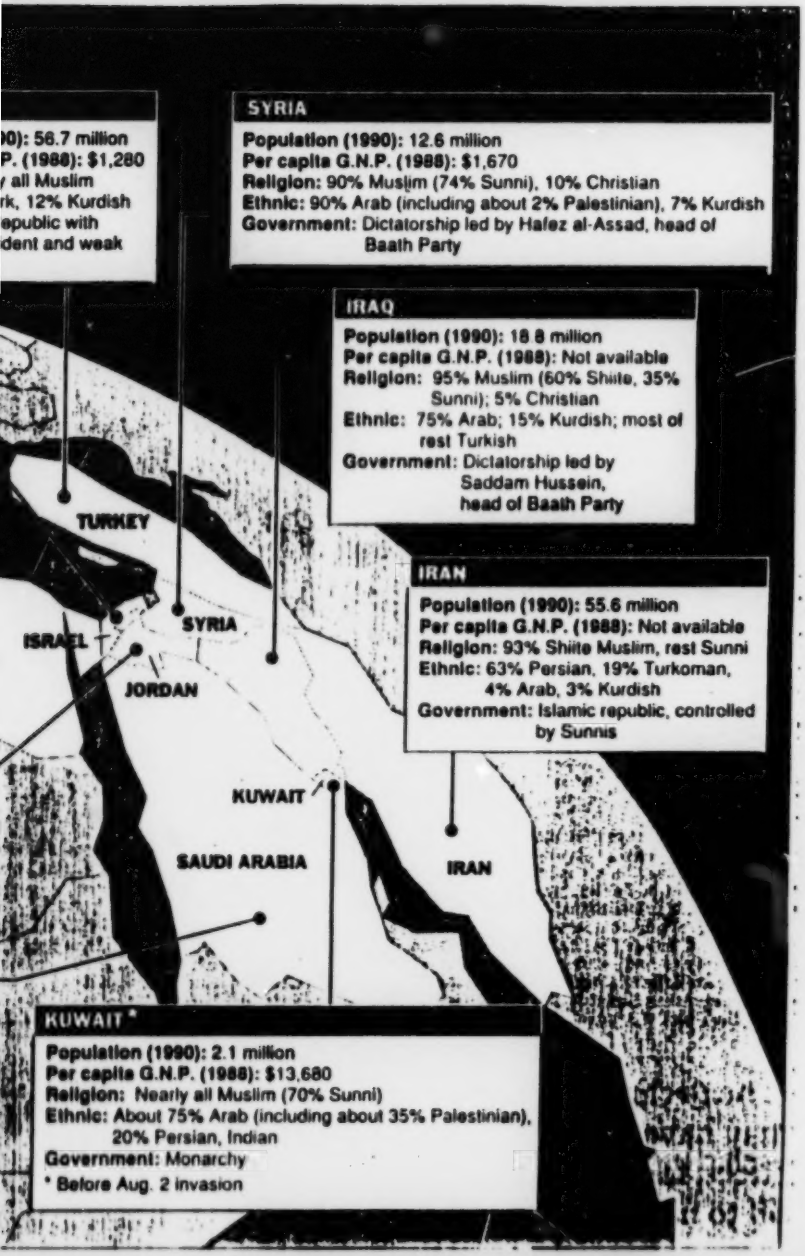
0): 56.7 million
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SYRIA
Population (1990): 12.6 million
Per capita G.N.P. (1988): $1,670
Religion: 90% Muslim (74% Sunni), 10% Christian
Ethnic: 90% Arab (including about 2% Palestinian), 7% Kurdish
Government: Dictatorship led by Hafez al-Assad, head of Baath Party
IRAQ
Population (1990): 18 8 million
Per capita G.N.P. (1988): Not available
Religion: 95% Muslim (60% Shiite, 35% Sunni); 5% Christian
Ethnic: 75% Arab; 15% Kurdish; most of rest Turkish
Government: Dictatorship led by Saddam Hussein, head of Baath Party
IRAN
Population (1990): 55.6 million
Per capita G.N.P. (1988): Not available
Religion: 93% Shiite Muslim, rest Sunni
Ethnic: 63% Persian, 19% Turkoman, 4% Arab, 3% Kurdish
Government: Islamic republic, controlled by Sunnis
TURKEY
ISRAEL
SYRIA
JORDAN
KUWAIT
SAUDI ARABIA
IRAN
KUWAIT *
Population (1990): 2.1 million
Per capita G.N.P. (1988): $13,680
Religion: Nearly all Muslim (70% Sunni)
Ethnic: About 75% Arab (including about 35% Palestinian), 20% Persian, Indian
Government: Monarchy
* Before Aug. 2 invasion

Follow-up Form

Please take a few minutes to complete and return this follow-up form. Your answers will help us improve the Public Talk Series material and make it a more valuable resource.

1) Did you use *America's Role in the Middle East*? ___ yes ___ no
If so, how? (check all that apply)
___ in a discussion group ___ for reference or research material ___ for lecture or classroom use

2) What did you think of the program?

	very good				poor
content	1	2	3	4	5
format	1	2	3	4	5
balance, fairness	1	2	3	4	5
suggestions for leaders	1	2	3	4	5
suggestions for participants	1	2	3	4	5
supplemental readings	1	2	3	4	5

3) Please answer the following if you held or were part of a discussion group.

Your role was ____ the organizer ____ the discussion leader ____ a participant

Who was the sponsoring organization (if any)? _____

How many attended? _____

Where was the program held? city _____ state _____

How many times did your group meet to discuss this topic? ____

Participants in this discussion group (check all that apply)
____ came together just for this discussion
____ hold discussions regularly
____ meet regularly, but not usually for issue-oriented discussion

Would you use study circles again? _____ yes _____ no

4) What future topics would you like to see in SCRC's Public Talk Series?

5) Other comments?

Name _____

Organization _____

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Publications of the Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC) include the Public Talk Series (PTS); training material for study circle organizers, leaders, and writers; a quarterly newsletter; a clearinghouse list of study circle material developed by a variety of organizations; and a bibliography on study circles and small-group learning. Prices for PTS programs are noted below. (You are welcome to order a single copy of PTS programs and then photocopy as many as necessary for your group.) All other publications are free of charge.

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___ Special 1992 **Election Year Discussion Set**
$5.00 for the set:
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___ 302 - *The Right to Die*
___ 301 - *The Death Penalty*
___ 304 - *Welfare Reform: What Should We Do for Our Nation's Poor?*
___ 202 - *American Society and Economic Policy: What Should Our Goals Be?*

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___ 303 - *Are There Reasonable Grounds for War?*
___ 106 - *International Environmental Issues: U.S. Policy Choices* *
___ 105 - *Facing a Disintegrated Soviet Union* *
___ 107 - *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Looking for a Lasting Peace* *
___ 102 - *America's Role in the Middle East* *
___ 104 - *The Role of the United States in a Changing World* *

* based on material developed by the Choices for the 21st Century Education Project of the Center for Foreign Policy Development at Brown University

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___ "Guidelines for Developing Study Circle Course Material" (32 pages)

Resource Briefs (single pages)
___ "What Is a Study Circle?"
___ "Leading a Study Circle"
___ "Organizing a Study Circle"
___ "The Role of the Participant"
___ "Developing Study Circle Course Material"
___ "What Is the Study Circles Resource Center?"
___ "The Study Circles Resource Center Clearinghouse"

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